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### At 'Take Me (I'm Yours),' Stop, Look and Walk Off With the Art



Chiara Parisi, a curator of the show "Take Me (I'm Yours)" at the Monnaie de Paris, with clothing piles that are part of the display. Credit Dmitry Kostyukov for The New York Times

PARIS — This week, as the art world descends on this city for the Festival of International Contemporary Art, a buzzing hive of commerce, a different exhibition is in full swing nearby. Called "Take Me (I'm Yours)," it turns viewers into participants, explores how art is disseminated and has the feel of a children's museum for grown-ups.

It is the third exhibition since last year at the Monnaie de Paris, or the French mint, as part of this 1,150-year-old institution's efforts to be more welcoming to the public and to show that the august French state can compete with some of Paris's cutting-edge private art foundations.

Held in the mint's elegant 18th-century building on the Left Bank, facing the Louvre, the exhibition shares a name with a 2015 work by Douglas Gordon, in which visitors can enter a raffle to win a dinner with that artist. The idea is for visitors to interact with or take the art, transforming the exhibition, which opened in mid-September and runs through Nov. 8. (An average of 1,000 people have visited each day.)

Some works are meant to disappear entirely. In "Dispersion," the French artist Christian Boltanski, a curator of the show, has placed four tall piles of used clothes in a high-ceilinged salon. Visitors can take out clothes in specially printed brown paper shopping bags.

"It's a playful approach," said Chiara Parisi, an Italian curator who, since 2011, has been the mint's first director of programming. But the show also asks searching questions. "It's a vision of how artists circulate their work and ideas," she added.

Ms. Parisi organized the large group exhibition with Mr. Boltanski and Hans Ulrich Obrist, a director of the Serpentine Gallery in London. Mr. Boltanski and Mr. Obrist first presented a show with the same concept at the Serpentine in 1995. This time, the exhibition includes 44 artists from around the world, ranging in age from their 20s to their 80s.

"Part of this is the idea that an exhibition can continue to grow," Mr. Obrist said. But if the rules of the art market dictate that artists' works are supposed to develop value over time, he added, the exhibition also tries to explore other avenues of "exchange and giveaway, dissemination and distribution of artworks."

The show also has a digital element. Visitors can snap photos of the art and post them online. "That idea of sharing and the communal thing is certainly more present because of the Internet than it was 20 years ago," Mr. Obrist said.

Some artists exhibited in the original show, but with different artworks. They include the London duo Gilbert & George, who in a 2015 work called "The Banners" are giving away buttons with 18 different slogans (including "Decriminalize Sex," "Ban Religion," "God Save the Queen"), and the Belgian artist Carsten Holler's "Pill Clock" (2015), which drops a placebo pill from a hole in the ceiling onto the floor every three seconds. Visitors can ingest them on the spot or take them away.

The German artist Hans-Peter Feldmann lined an entire room with Eiffel Tower postcards, which visitors can also take away. The work explores how objects become art. "If you look at it, it's like a postcard of the outside of a museum," Mr. Boltanski said. "But if you put it in a 'Take Me (I'm Yours)' bag it becomes precious."

"It's like the water at Lourdes," he added. "If it's water, it's worth nothing. If you put it in the bottle, it's worth something. It is a very serious reflection on the philosophy of what a relic is."

In Yoko Ono's "Wish Tree" (1996-2015), one of her three works in the show, visitors can write messages on manila tags and hang them on potted olive trees, while in Roman Ondak's "Swap" (2011), a performer, standing in for the artist, asks visitors to swap something they have on them for something else, and talk about their object's value.

"We wanted the mint to be open to a wider public," said Christophe Beaux, president of the French mint, which is part of the Finance Ministry. He added that ticket sales and revenues from commemorative coins — the mint's main activity — fully cover the costs of the arts programming.

The programming comes as part of a 75 million euro (about \$85 million) renovation of the mint, and a gradual opening of its spaces to the public, which began in 2009 and is expected to conclude in 2017.

"Take Me (I'm Yours)" follows exhibitions by the mischievous American artist Paul McCarthy and the Belgian conceptual artist Marcel Broodthaers.

The idea is to show that the French state can also be an innovator, on par with private foundations in Paris, like those of Cartier and Louis Vuitton, which have mounted ambitious exhibitions and promoted their brands. (The mint, after all, wants to promote the euro "brand" amid the euro crisis.)

Most French euro coins are minted near Bordeaux, but commemorative coins and medals like the Legion of Honor are still printed at the mint, in the heart of Paris. Since 2008 the mint also had an artist residency program and for decades it has asked artists to make collectors' coins. "You don't use them to buy a croissant," Mr. Beaux said.